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AMERICAN MUSIC, GLOBAL MESSAGES: BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE COLD WAR WORLD

**Principal Investigators:** Danielle Fosler-Lussier, Associate Professor of Music

During the Cold War, more than 1,000 professional and amateur musicians from the United States performed around the world in programs sponsored by the State Department and other agencies. Their mission was to enhance the reputation of American culture, compete with performers from Communist countries, forge personal connections with citizens in other countries, and create a positive impression of the United States and its foreign policy.

In this book project, Danielle Fosler-Lussier evaluates the musical and diplomatic outcomes of state-sponsored tours from the 1950s to 1970s. Through an innovative blend of musicology, diplomatic history, and globalization studies, she captures the perspectives of musicians, audiences and diplomats, examining results of the program both at home and abroad.

In the early chapters of the book Fosler-Lussier treats classical music, jazz, popular and folk music separately, as each type of music played a different role in America’s cultural diplomacy. Classical music was used to cultivate the musical ambitions of people in other lands, who considered it a compliment when visiting musicians offered them challenging music in European styles.



Jazz allowed the U.S. government to manage perceptions of U.S. race relations; it also encouraged musicians to play together. Popular styles were especially useful in cultivating young audiences abroad. Religious music allowed American musicians to make contact with Protestant churchgoers abroad and reinforce the State Department’s message about the United States as a “spiritual” nation.

The book then turns to two broad chapters. The first evaluates U.S.-Soviet musical diplomacy and its role in facilitating détente. The second steps back to examine how Cold War musical diplomacy worked, the kinds of relationships it built, and the political and social implications of these relationships. Fosler-Lussier finds that states were highly effective in recruiting citizens to participate in diplomacy that felt “positive,” and that this recruitment was an important form of social organization for citizen-participants.

Fosler-Lussier’s study combines archival sources, such as concert reviews from foreign newspapers and narratives from diplomats that described musical performances, with oral history, such as interviews with surviving musicians and Foreign Service Officers. The resulting study is of scholarly quality but accessible to general readers. The book is now under pre-publication review.

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